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 COVER PHOTOGRAPH — Lesotho mineworker at home — Joe Alferts

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## **EDITORIALS**

### **1. RESETTLEMENT.**

There was a moment during the parliamentary debate on Dr. Koornhof's Department of Cooperation and Development vote, when it was possible to hope that the Government might be having second thoughts on its resettlement plans.

Before the debate it had been learnt that a proposal to move the Northern Transvaal black community of Matok-Ramagoep to land adjoining the Lebowa homeland had been abandoned. And during the debate the Chairman of the Government's Consolidation Commission, Mr. van der Walt, and one of its members, Mr. Volker, M.P. for Kliprivier in Northern Natal, where many black freehold areas await the resettlement axe, hinted that some previously threatened areas might not now be moved. Mr. Volker spoke in terms of moving what he called squatters (but what are in fact tenants) on black freehold land, to new, serviced townships, and leaving alone landowners who, could establish that they could farm productively.

Unfortunately whatever slight hopes these statements had raised were soon dashed by Dr. Koornhof himself. In reply to a series of questions put to him by PFP member Graham McIntosh he said that plans to remove eight Natal black freehold areas, most of which fall within Mr. Volker's constituency and all of which have appealed to Dr. Koornhof not to be moved, are to go ahead. He told Mr. McIntosh that resettlement projects must be seen as an effort "to improve the general standard of life of the communities concerned".

With due respect to the Minister we cannot think of any reason why they should be viewed in that way. They may look like that from the comfort of his Pretoria office but they certainly do not to anyone who has been moved from the tranquillity of Roosboom to thug-ridden Ezakheni, or to somebody about to be moved from comparatively peaceful Matiwane's Kop to Ekuvukeni in that part of Kwa-Zulu where tribal feuding accompanied by murder, theft and arson is the order of the day.

Dr. Koornhof's statement is typical of the Nationalist approach to everyone with whom they have to do. Big Brother, in the form of the Nationalist Party, knows what is best for all of us. It matters not a whit to Big Brother that the people he wants to move have stated quite unequivocally that they would rather stay where they are, and that no resettled community of our acquaintance, given a free choice in the matter before its removal, would not rather have stayed where it was. In the eyes of Pretoria anyone who does not accept that Big Brother, in the form of the Minister, must know best, is either misguided, mischievous, or has been misled ——— a potentially irritating nuisance. In case such nuisances should actively oppose a particular removal, or removals in general, Dr. Koornhof has come up with a handy solution. He has decided to keep his plans secret. He told Mr. McIntosh that in future removals would be treated as confidential, which presumably means he will no longer feel obliged to answer any questions that Mr. McIntosh might ask about them.

To return, however, to Mr. Volker's suggestion that land-owners who could prove that they could farm productively should be left to do so, while tenants and those who could not should be moved, we have a better suggestion than that. If apartheid ideology is to be turned upside-down to the extent that black people are to be allowed to continue to own and live on land in "white" South Africa, why not take it a bit further? It is the restrictions on the free purchase of land by black people legislated by successive white governments which have turned many **blackspots** which were originally intended for farming into places which are now largely residential. Many of the tenants living on them would have bought land elsewhere had it been possible. A considerable number have lived where they do now for years. The **blackspot** in which they live is

as much home to them as it is to the person who owns it. Why not let these rural residential areas remain rural residential areas? Let them be controlled by their own communities, subject to health and other laws of general application. Let them have access to the finance which could reverse whatever soil and community degeneration they may be suffering from. That, surely, would be a much cheaper and more productive way "to improve the general standard of life of the communities concerned" than Dr. Koornhof's secret mass removals? And instead of creating still more of the bitterness, destabilisation and demoralisation which have been part and parcel of every removal so far undertaken, South Africa would, in these areas at least, be making a long-term investment in stability which would benefit all of us. □

## 2. THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL REPORT.

If you have been a committed Nationalist all your working life, first as a party official and then as an M.P., in an organisation dedicated to Afrikaner baasskap in one form or another over everyone else in the country, black or brown, white English-speaking Catholic, Jew or Protestant, it takes considerable courage to start telling your supporters, all of them brought up with the same commitment, that those days are over, the time has come to start sharing that power with others.

In terms of his background and training Mr. Botha has certainly shown such courage in his apparent acceptance of the President's Council proposals for the extension of political rights on a consociational basis to the Coloured and Indian people. It could not have been easy for him to take what must seem a hazardous step on a new course in the face of the tenacious clinging to past myths by a large part (it may still turn out to be the larger part) of Afrikanerdom.

But while we admire Mr. Botha's courage and wish him luck in any confrontation he may have with the men of the dark ages, Treurnicht, Connie Mulder, and others even worse, that admiration doesn't extend to the recommendations of the President's Council. Those recommendations we must take as they have been presented to us and not as what their more optimistic critics are hoping they may turn into.

We find the idea of an executive president answerable to virtually nobody quite terrifying. This is not just because, if Mr. Botha's calculations prove wrong, we could end up soon with a Treurnicht, a Mulder, or perhaps even a Vorster, as president — or at some future date, under a new regime, with some other monster of a different hue. It is because even the most benign-appearing figure on the day of his election — and let us say at once that there don't seem to be any such in the running — could well become a monster before his seven years were up; especially when, as the

present proposals seem to suggest, he will be controlled neither by the voters nor the courts.

While the executive presidency proposals are terrifying the exclusion of blacks from the membership and consociational recommendations of the Council are fatal shortcomings which only some future miracle can make good. What black man could ever support the proposals of any constitutional body on which he had no representation? What black man could regard the recommendations of such a body, when they make provision for a kind of power-sharing between all the groups which were represented, and specifically exclude him from it, as anything but a ganging-up on him? And who else who isn't black could see them in any other way?

It is not enough, as some people seem to think, to have one or two sentences in the Report phrased so ambiguously that a friendly interpretation could mean that one day there might be a place for blacks somewhere in the dispensation proposed. The fact is that, as it stands, the President's Council Report still subscribes to the Nationalist Party dream that the place for black South Africans to exercise their political rights is in the homelands. And everything any Government spokesman, including the Prime Minister, has said since the Report appeared, confirms that they all still subscribe to that dream too.

As Reality has said often enough before, until that dream is abandoned and black leaders are drawn in at the very earliest stages to work out our common future with everyone else, all recommendations for that future will be built on sand.

The President's Council proposals as such offer no hope for the future. The hope they do offer is that they mark the beginning of a process from which it will be impossible to turn back and which will lead eventually to something like a new National Convention. It is of course this prospect which terrifies the Treurnichts. □